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REV. DR. M'VICKAR'S ADDRESS

TO THE

CALIFORNIA REGIMENT.

CAMP POLK, GOVERNOR'S ISLAND,
7th Reg't N. Y. U. S. Volunteers,
Sept. 11th, 1846.

REV. DR. McVICKAR :

Dear Sir—It affords us great pleasure to state that we have been appointed a Committee, in behalf of the officers of our Regiment, for the purpose of expressing to you, in our names, their extreme gratification in witnessing the interest which you have expressed in the California Expedition.

We beg you, therefore, to accept our sincere thanks for your great kindness, and request that you will, if in your power, transmit to the Committee a copy of your beautiful address, upon the occasion of the presentation of the Bibles, by the New-York Bible Society, in order that both officers and men may, when far from friends and homes, still have the pleasure of referring to it, as a token of the kind and generous spirit of our countrymen.

With sincere regard,

We are your ob't servants,

Capt. S. G. STEELE,

Capt. FRANCIS J. LIPPITT,

Lieut. J. C. BONNYCASTLE.

Rev. Dr. McVICKAR,

Chaplain, &c.

GOVERNOR'S ISLAND,
Fort Columbus, 12th Sept. 1846.

GENTLEMEN: Permit me, through you as their Committee, to return my sincere thanks to the Officers of the California Regiment, for the kind and flattering estimate they have been pleased to make of my willingness of service towards their command during their encampment on the Island. That service, my official station made in some degree my duty—the kindness with which it was received, turned duty into pleasure; and I can only pray that our short Pastoral intercourse may not have been without its mutual blessing, to be remembered with gratitude when oceans shall divide us.

With your request of a copy of my address on occasion of distributing Bibles, &c., to the Regiment, I comply with unfeigned diffidence, as feeling how little worthy it was of that deeply interesting occasion. I do it, however, with the thankful prayer and hope that the faithful words of a Christian friend and minister may not be without their weight and value, when recalled in the far distant home to which you are destined.

I remain, Gentlemen, with best wishes and sincerest prayers,
Your friend and servant,

JOHN McVICKAR,
Chaplain of Fort Columbus.

To Capt. S. G. STEELE,
Capt. FRANCIS J. LIPPITT, } Committee, &c.
Lieut. J. C. BONNYCASTLE, }

REV. DR. M'VICKAR'S ADDRESS.

UNDER favor of your Colonel's permission I address myself to you—Officers, non-Commissioned and Privates of the California Regiment—and never before, I confess, have I addressed myself to my fellow man with so deep a sense of my inability to say that which befits the occasion and the audience. It is not your numbers that daunt me—I have addressed assemblies as numerous—nor is it your military array, and that I a man of peace am called to counsel soldiers—with that too my official duty has made me familiar—nor yet that I speak to men presently bound for the battle field; even with such solemn partings, recent events have made me alas but too conversant; but never before have I been called to address an organized body of armed citizens who go forth alike to conquer and to colonize, and who bid adieu to their country and their homes, with the professed understanding that they return not, but are to find alike their dwellings and their graves in a far distant land. This thought, I confess, overcomes me, and when all the deep and varied responsibilities involved in such an expedition arise before me, I feel bewildered as well as overpowered, and can only throw myself as a man and brother on your own sensibilities on this occasion to give any weight to the few feeble parting words I have now to utter.

But it is to the ulterior objects of your expedition alone I shall speak. As a military armament I look not at it and speak not of it. The duties and responsibilities of that are in other and higher hands—nor is it a subject that befits my peaceful mission to you this day. From the dark fields of

bloody strife, if such await you (which God forefend) I turn gladly to the brighter scenes which greet the prophetic eye when peace has converted your "swords into plough shares and your spears into pruning hooks," and the transplanted germ of American freedom shall begin to strike its roots deep on the shores of the broad Pacific. Looked at in this light, what scenes of duty and high responsibility arise before the thoughtful mind. 'Tis then that I see in your array a mission not of war but of peace and love—like unto some armed convoy of high benevolence freighted with precious gifts—from the wealthy East unto the forests of the West—a royal donation from the boisterous Atlantic unto her quiet ocean sister. In your departure ocean speaks unto ocean and says, "Receive at my hand the gift of civilization. That lamp of Science, Law and Religion, which I myself received from the far East, I now, in turn, hand over to the distant West. Freely I have received—freely I give. Take the boon and hold it worthily."

But to speak without figure, who but must see in this national transfer of American citizens from ocean to ocean, a forward step taken (whether man intend it or not) in that great Providential movement which from the earliest times has sent the tide of civilization westward. Thus looked at, you, my fellow-citizens, constituting the California Regiment, are the living scion cut off from the Parent American Stock, destined to engraft the Institutions of the East on the wild plants of the West—you are our chosen carriers to introduce into less favored lands a higher and purer Christian civilization. And now let no man scorn this as an ideal picture, for if your armament in its more peaceful objects will not bear this interpretation, and if in its fulfilment it shall not reasonably carry them out, God's blessing, be well assured, does not and cannot rest upon it, for such is his blessed and unchanging will, that even thus shall knowledge and virtue and fair

Religion circumnavigate the earth, through men who go forth as you do bearing in your hands the seeds of a better civilization. Whatever else your vocation, that is your primary one, as God's children. Nor can man's neglect or abuse wholly defeat it—even out of evil God still educes good, the sword of conquest is made to open His way, and the deep laden barques of self-interest that rush in, are still made to bear His gifts to destitute or savage lands—peace and the arts of life, order and law, science and its teachers, the Missionary and the Gospel. Such is ever the circuit of God's footsteps on the earth. Such, therefore, must ever be the tracks of man's duty in following it. Enlightened and Christian man is ever to be the pioneer of a better civilization.

And now among the carriers of this better seed, what race stands so prominent on earth as that of which we Americans are on this Western Continent the Representatives—a race that in the tide of time, since first called forth on the theatre of the world's history, has never yet turned back, whose course has ever been onward and upward, and over whose destined Empire there would seem to hang no other cloud than that which may arise from their own possible unworthiness, should they be found to turn into base gain or lust of dominion, a trust of power committed to their hands for the Civilizing and Christianizing of the earth. Then do I truly believe the abused talent will be taken from them and given to others more worthy, and when the spiritual light is quenched, that the candlestick of power will be removed; for what right have we to claim exemption from that righteous fate which has withdrawn the gift of dominion from other chosen races, should we like them prove unfaithful to the mission on which we are sent. Let us then, as Americans, “not be high-minded but fear”—let us “be watchful and strengthen the things that remain.”

To make void that curse of unworthiness is a responsibility that rests in its due degree on all of Anglo-Saxon blood ; but in a special degree, permit me to say, does it rest on each member, high or low, of this California Regiment. Never before has it, in my poor judgment, so rested on any equal number of American citizens, for never before have we as a nation thus colonized, and in the face of the civilized world put the stamp of our name and government and land, on a new, distant and dubious settlement. We have at least in this given a gage to the civilized world which we are bound to redeem on peril of our honor. It behoves us all to remember that it is indeed a most high and solemn act, one which the Christian world looks at in doubt or fear, one, therefore, that shall hereafter take its place in the world's history. The living germ of a new State and a new Empire is as on this day to be solemnly planted by American hands—a living fountain as on this day to be opened in the wilderness, whence coming generations shall drink either sweet waters or bitter. *Which* that shall be—on you, I repeat it, mainly depends—on *you*, its founders, legislators, citizens, rulers—on *you* officers and men of this California Regiment. It is a responsibility that so rests upon you that you cannot shake it off.

Shall then your country permit you to depart laden with such responsibilities, bearing forth as you do in the face of the whole civilized world, her name and fame, the credit of her Institutions, her moral training and her Religious faith without one parting word of kindness or of caution? No, my friends! Though it be but from lips feeble as mine, yet as an anxious mother will your country this day lay her hand on the head and her parting charge on the heart and conscience of every son here present, who goes forth not to return. Even while I thus speak do I see her, the venerable Genius of our Anglo-Saxon land, the common mother of us all. I see her rise

up, from this her watery throne where she sits embosomed amid the peaceful fleets of an unbounded commerce, to bid you, her armed sons, farewell. I see her followed in dim procession by a long train of patriots and heroes and Christian men. Men who not only here but in older lands have toiled and fought and bled, not for conquest but for right; not for license but for law, and that they might build up for posterity that which we here enjoy, a fair and (I trust) an enduring fabric of constitutional freedom. In that long line may I not say I recognize conspicuous the venerated form of Washington, the Father of our country. He who built up our liberty on the foundation of virtue and religion, and has left imprest on every American heart the fairest portraiture the world ever saw of the Christian soldier—the hero, without stain and without reproach. But higher yet do I recognize the Genius of our Anglo-Saxon land. I see her form, I hear her words, and mine, believe me, are their faithful echo.

“Go forth” she says, “my well armed sons—the sword in your hands, but peace in your hearts and justice in your deeds. Go forth as Apostles from this my favored land to teach and to bless those to which you go. Remember that you bear a widely honored name. It has ever been a lineage of faith and virtue, of courage and gentleness, of peace of order and of religion. Such has it been in the old world, such in the heroic times of the new. Let not its fair fame be tarnished or its Institutions defamed by unfilial hands, or unworthy tongues. As you bear your Country’s ensign so, remember, do you, your Country’s honor. Let not the name of American Citizen ever receive a blot through you. Let it not be said that with Americans, might was the measure of right, or that gold outweighed justice, or that the soldiers’ sword made heavy the scale of a vanquished enemy’s ransom. Rather let that name be known as one of blessing wherever it is heard

even as that of a Teacher appointed of Heaven to instruct the nations of the earth—to exhibit to the world the living proof how Liberty may dwell united with law, how individual freedom may stand linked together with Public order, and Christian faith in the nation walk hand in hand with an unfettered private conscience.

Go forth then, my Children, and not only as citizens but as men, remembering that you leave at home those whom you will make to hold up or to hang their heads when in future days your names and career are mentioned—the Father, whose name you bear—the Mother who nursed you at her bosom—the Sister with whom in early life you played and who now dashes from her eye the parting tear, in her blessed confidence that you, a brother and a son can *never* forget those whom you early loved. In that sacred confidence of Home affection do I too trust, that nothing unworthy, nothing base, will ever be permitted to stain your name or that of your country. I read it in your looks—I see it in your eye—in that eye which even now glistens when ‘Home’ is mentioned and which, in a far distant clime, will daily turn to the picture of ‘Home,’ as to a charm to guard alike your heart and life—to fill the one with pure and generous thoughts, the other, with virtuous and noble deeds.

And that you may perform well all your parts, whether as soldiers or Colonists, as Citizens, or as private men, go forth as CHRISTIANS, and take the Blessed Book I now proffer to you, the gift of your Christian Country as the sum and substance of her farewell. Take it as the best Charter you can draft of your public liberties; the surest safeguard you can have of private virtue and the only enduring basis on which your Social Institutions can grow up. Believe *me*—believe the voice of history, that Society without Religion is a rope of sand, and government without the fear of God is but tyranny under the name of law.

Think not then lightly of this gift of a Bible, even as human Legislators, for as no State can stand but upon Religion, so no Christian State can stand but upon the Bible. It is its LIFE, and losing *that*, even Empires sink into ruin, they die and rot like things of earth. Take then this blessed book in your hands, it contains the only Religion that can stand inquiry, bind it closely to your hearts, it teaches the only faith that can bring them comfort, and be assured that the closer you do bind it to your hearts and lives and Social Institutions the greater will be the strength of your new State as well as the more enduring its prosperity. It will prove a safe-guard amid the perils of the wilderness, far beyond what man can give. Without its aid vain will be your arms, when physical strength will be in the governed ; vain your laws, for what will they be without reverence for the lawgiver ? vain your freedom without virtue, to secure it, and very vain all attempts to build up a people's virtue on any other foundation than that of the Religion of the Bible, on reverence for that great unseen Lawgiver whose eyes penetrate alike the wilderness and the human heart, whose hand asks not the aid of human power, and whose secret justice keeps an account with man's conscience whether on the shores of the Pacific or of the Atlantic sea. To that inestimable gift I add another, next in my love and as I think (viewed as a practical embodiment of Bible teaching) in value, the Liturgy of the Church of that land which is the home of our Anglo-Saxon race, the home where our liberties were cradled, and our pure Religion nursed, and whence our national blood has mainly flowed. 'Go forth then,' I say again, 'my well armed Sons,' confiding not so much in the arms you bear, as in the God you serve, the faith you profess and the virtues you practice. Look up in trust to that great and holy Being who hath hitherto guided our race and nation as by a 'pillar of cloud and fire,' and who will lead you, their Sons, as He

led your Sires, if you prove worthy of them, to peaceful homes, over a stormy ocean and through trackless forests. Only follow as becomes your lineage the Anglo Saxon footsteps, take Gods word for your guide and build up all your Institutions, in His faith and fear. Let the banner of Christ be planted, wherever you plant that of your Country, and wheresoever you place your foot place too God's house in the wilderness. THIS, even as a mother's dying word, I charge upon your filial obedience. Build *early* a temple to God's honor, dedicate it to a Saviour's worship and from the rude log Church let daily prayers ascend from consecrated lips to bring down a daily blessing on the still ruder log cabin."

Such words fellow-citizens, of parting caution seem I to have heard from the lips of our common mother and as such have I, however feebly, rehearsed them unto you. God grant that true words may not prove fruitless through the feebleness of him who speaks them. One thing gives me hope. This day will be remembered by you in distant lands not so much for what is said as what is given. When oceans shall roll between and the words of the Speaker be forgotten and the heart that prompted them have long ceased to beat, still, shall this volume, speak, and this day when they were given, be by you freshly remembered. It may be, on the battle-field, in one hurried but true thought of God and your Saviour; it may be on the bed of sickness, in the hour of penitence and prayer; I trust it will often be in the peaceful home of the happy Emigrant, when your eye, my Brother, glancing on this book, shall bring back this day and this hour, and this beautiful scene, and you will say to the dear ones clustering around you. "Yes, I remember well the day when this blessed volume was put into my hands, I thank God for the gift. It has been my guide and counsel, my stay and consolation in many a dark hour in the wilderness."

Such, men and Brethren, fellow-soldiers and fellow-citizens, but above all, FELLOW CHRISTIANS, such is the parting farewell, of one whose prayers will follow you, where his words can no longer reach you, and who prays now, that the God and Saviour, whose he is, and whom he serves, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, will be your guide and guard wherever you are, will bless, preserve and keep you, now and forever. Amen.

DISTRIBUTION.

To each non-commissioned officer and soldier of the Regiment, do I now present, in the name of the New-York Bible Society, by whose liberality it is furnished, a copy of that Sacred Volume, together with an affectionate and fervent prayer, that it may prove to each one of you, the words of Eternal Life. Guard it carefully, read it faithfully, and may God's blessing be with you in the daily perusal of it.

I am also commissioned, to present to each soldier desiring it, as a manual of devotion, both of public and private use, a copy of the Book of Common Prayer, on the part of the Bible and Common Prayer Book Society of New-York, the Bishop White Prayer Book Society of Philadelphia and several private contributors.

I am also enabled to present to the Regiment, on the part of many donors,* (a list of whom is herewith annexed,) three small libraries, apportioned to the three ships of the command, with a view to their re-union in your future settlement, as the foundation of a Colonial library. However small the collection, it will serve at least to strengthen the ties of home, and to remind you, that

* American Tract Society, New York Protestant Episcopal Tract Society, Sunday School Union, D. Apoleton & Co., Mark W. Newman, Henry M. Onderdonk & Co., Wiley & Putnam, Saxton & Miles, Rev. Joseph Salkeld, Dr. Greenhow, of Washington, Stanford & Swords, Harper & Brothers.

your country still holds you in affectionate remembrance.

*To Lieut. Col. Henry S. Burton and Major James A. Hardy:—*To you, Gentlemen, as vested with a distinct Command in your respective vessels, I have the honor to present, on the part of the same Societies a copy of the Bible and Prayer Book, inscribed with your names and official Rank, with a view to facilitate the Services of Public Worship, on ship board. Receive them, as a parting gift, from a Country that knows your worth and thorough military training. Receive them, as the parting gift of a friend, who is well assured that you value them aright, and will so use them as to make them a blessing to yourselves, and those under your Command.

*To Col. J. D. Stevenson:—*To you, Sir, as the Colonel of the Regiment, Leader of the Expedition and probable Ruler of the new Colony, I have also the honor to present an engraved Bible, on the part of the New York Bible Society, and on the part of the N. Y. Bible and Common Prayer Book Society, a Book of Common Prayer, similarly inscribed, with your name and rank. Receive them in expression of the deep sympathy felt by this Christian land, in the religious welfare of yourself and Command, and of their equally deep conviction that you will find in them the surest aids to discipline, as well as the wisest guidance to those who govern. It is the closing prayer of one who yields to no man here present, in the deep interest that he feels, that this Expedition, shall be one of honorable and prosperous issue—the prayer of one, who is alike your friend and servant, it is his prayer that your path of duty may ever be open and your course in it ever blest, as blest it doubtless will be, so long as guided by the precepts and principles these volumes teach, of justice and piety, of purity and peace.

On the part, and in the name of our Common Country, do I now, bid to you, and those under your command, an affectionate and respectful FAREWELL.



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